

## Mariposa County Fire Advisory Committee Meeting November 16, 2022

1. **Roll Call:** Alison Deak, Steve Ward, Gary Colliver, Tara Fouch-Moore, Glenn Cahill, Russ Marks, Mike Keyser, Darren Mills, Melinda Barrett, Wes Smith, Barbara Cone, Dan Buckley, Fadzayi Mashiri, Steve Engfer

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2. **Resolution:** A resolution of the Mariposa County Fire Advisory Committee proclaiming a local emergency, ratifying the proclamation of a state of emergency by the Governor of the State of California on March 4, 2020 regarding an outbreak of respiratory illness due to a novel coronavirus (a disease now known as Covid-19), and authorizing remote teleconference meetings of the legislative bodies of the Mariposa County Fire Advisory Committee for the period December 16, 2022 to December 21, 2023 pursuant to Brown Act provisions.

*Motion by Tara Fouch-Moore, Seconded by Gary Colliver  
Approved unanimously*

*County Counsel advised us that even with the hybrid style meetings, in person and teleconference, the Committee still needs to adopt the Resolution at the beginning of each meeting in order to be compliant with the Brown Act. The agenda includes the required Resolution.*

3. **Approval of minutes: October 19, 2022**

*Motion by Melinda Barrett, Seconded by Tara Fouch-Moore  
Abstained from vote: Wes Smith and Russ Marks.  
Approved unanimously*

4. **Public comments**

**Albert Boyd, property owner in Mariposa County,**

Albert expressed concern about the amount of brush piles that are not being burned and was interested in hearing if there was any inducement that Cal Fire or the county could implement to require landowners to burn their brush piles. Albert also suggested giving landowners an award and/or improving community engagement around the topic. Albert further expressed concern about the amount of money being spent by the state to require members of other communities to burn their brush and help those that are unable to take care of their properties.

*\*\*This topic will be added to the next MCFAC meeting agenda for discussion.*

5. **Discussion and possible action**

- a. **Changes being made to CWPP appendices to streamline and include FIREWISE assessment for ease of community involvement**

Chair stated that Secretary Smallcombe recommended integrating the county assessments in the CWPP with the assessment required for communities to gain Firewise recognition to avoid overcomplicating and duplicity in the assessment process. By integrating the two methods, it will allow communities to pass assessments directly to the State Fire Marshall's office to gain recognition. The Mariposa County Planning Department is working on draft appendices to bring the assessment to the committee. The CWPP has already been adopted by the board. Once it is updated with a new

assessment template, it will require board adoption. Any communities that have already begun using the original assessment process outlined in the CWPP, can continue to use this process and the county will integrate the two assessments.

The first Mariposa County facilitated Firewise community meeting occurred in Greeley Hill on November 10<sup>th</sup> and had 35 attendees. The meeting and outreach process for the meeting will continue to be utilized to engage with additional communities.

Public comment: We should be using door-to-door personal contact to share this information and volunteers could help share this information. Fliers are not enough.

Response from committee: The county does not have the capacity to contact each person in Mariposa County by going door-to-door. Firewise communities will be able to conduct outreach within their own communities though and the county fire coordinator, if funded, can also help to organize outreach for these events. The committee also expressed that fliers have been an effective outreach method within Mariposa County.

**b. Discussion regarding vacation rentals and hotels as a potential revenue source for services**

Russ Cahill explained that the Mariposa County Public Utility District has a customer base of four million people that use services in Mariposa County but 8,000 people actually pay for the services. TOT funds go to the general fund but another fee could be assessed to tap in tourists using vacation rentals. Steve Engfer commented that Mariposa County does not have impact fees for development and increased services due to development that requires protection by the fire department; we do not currently have an adequate funding mechanism to pay for these services. Steve Ward cautioned that it was ultimately up to the community to determine whether they want increased VFD staffing before we find a funding source. Measure M is paid through TOT funds, but we would need to tack on additional funds in order to take advantage of the tourism economy to pay for fire services, rather than further burdening taxpayers. Gary Colliver asked whether structures like hotels require additional fire protection and Steve Ward replied that they require more firefighters and a different style of equipment. Gary Colliver responded that that was the justification for impact fees. Steve Ward responded that the community doesn't want to pay for it, which is an education issue. The best mitigation is to reduce the time frame of a response and our current service level has declined. We need another way to maintain a fire service level. We can promote this, but the community ultimately gets to decide. If the county wants this, we could come up with a MCFAC recommendation. Barbara Cone further cautioned that the community may not understand why monies from Measure M isn't already supporting this. They may be upset that this isn't already being used to support this and wonder where the money is going. Steve Ward explained that Measure M funds command and control by Cal Fire of the county VFD, Sheriffs, and roads. It is up to the board to determine how the monies are distributed and spent. Russ Cahill further explained that one of the issues is that is an annual budget allocation with proportions of monies spent for each of the three categories that can change each year. A fee would be easier because it would be designated specifically for fire. Public comment on this was that roads are an important part of fire, which the group agreed. Gary Colliver then asked what is needed to move this forward and Tara Fouch-Moore responded that it would require a certain level of public education before bringing this to the board. We

need the public to know that we don't have enough money to staff a fire department. Russ Cahill added that we also need to determine an adequate level of service. Steve Ward tabled the discussion as a topic that MCFAC could discuss again in the future if it was something that the public was interested in.

**c. Grant coordinator position update**

Chief Bernard worked with Melinda Barrett to write a grant to fund a County Fire Coordinator position and submitted the grant last week. The committee will be updated on the status. Steve Ward will begin working with others to write a position description to share with the county if the position is funded. The position description will be shared with the committee and revised accordingly once it is ready. Steve Engfer noted that it is quickly becoming evident how important this position will be and having a job description ready will be helpful regardless of whether the position is funded.

**6. Updates, Activity Reports, and Future Items**

**Mike Keyser:** The next round of Cal Fire Fire Prevention Grants will tentatively open on December 15<sup>th</sup>. Melinda commented that it would be a good idea for the committee to who is planning to submit grants and discuss potential projects for funding.

*\*\* This topic will be added to the next MCFAC meeting agenda for discussion.*

**Russ Cahill:** The Darrah Bridge project is progressing but is behind schedule due to the rain. It is expected to be completed in December. He didn't know where Public Works was at with the Three Tanks project but believed they were moving forward with proposals. Public Works has a number of projects over the next two years and the Dog Town Bridge is likely to be the next bridge project although it will cause access issues. Sarah Williams' last day of work at the planning department is December 2<sup>nd</sup> after 33 years of exceptional service.

**Steve Engfer:** The Midpine Planning Advisory committee discussed Oak Fire evacuation route and the status of Colorado Road, and unmet needs for future evacuation roads. They were interested in MCFAC or a smaller subgroup (made up of fire, OES, and the Sheriff's department) looking at evacuation routes in the future and potential pinchpoints within evacuation routes. This will be added as an agenda item at the Midpines Planning Committee meeting early next year.

**Barbara Cone:** The Fire Safe Council is wrapping up the Stumpfield and Ferrand projects and is catching up with the nearly 100 homes on the waitlist for brushing and chipping. RPFs for the Alta Vista and Mt. Bullion projects will be going out soon. Wagoner is back in implementation. Barbara is currently writing a Lushmeadows ladder fuels grant using the SRS Title-III money granted to the FSC.

**Melinda Barrett:** Due to the urgency of weather, Mariposa RCD is focused on erosion control work in Jerseydale and in the Oak Fire Burn Scar. They have a small grant to treat 30 properties and are halfway through on-site assessment. California Conservation Corps crews will be hired to do some of the work. Mariposa RCD will be starting up the forest health grant after the first of the year.

**Wes Smith:** OES is making good progress on Oak Fire Debris removal although it has been pushed back due to inclement weather. OES submitted a notice of interest for \$1.5 million of mitigation money for defensible space, fuels reduction, and similar projects. Wes will discuss with the committee if it is awarded and whether we want to accept it. OES is also moving

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forward with CVAA processing. Also in the process of rewriting emergency operations plan for the county, which requires addressing emergency evacuation routes. Raquel Sandoval also started recently as the Mariposa County OES Deputy Coordinator. Steve Ward said that it would be good to plan a 4-6 hour meeting to go over and run scenarios on evacuation routes and structure defense maps in a discussion form to ensure they are still valid and accurate. The point of contact for planning this would be Sergeant Rumfeld.

**Darren Mills:** PG&E is continuing the wood removal program remove/chip woody debris from hazard trees felled during the Oak Fire (over 4 inches dbh). This is an opt-in program where a form needs to be completed by landowner. PG&E is also going up the service area working with fire departments to provide gas emergency live fire drills and can offer 2-hour public safety workshops to first responders about basic natural gas safety. They also have modification of the class for those with certs.

**Alison Deak:** The Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) had two meetings in the past two weeks. The first was an informational session for community members to learn about the PBA and the second was a meeting PBA members to learn about the burn planning and implementation process. An additional PBA information session will take place on December 8<sup>th</sup> from 5:30 to 7:30 at South Gate Brewing Company in Oakhurst. Cooperative Extension is also planning a pile burning workshop at the end of January and a post-fire forest resilience workshop series for landowners in February.

**Tara Fouch-Moore:** Southern Sierra Miwok Nation is continuing to work in partnership with Sierra Foothills Conservancy to conduct cultural burning along the Mariposa Creek Parkway and additional funding was secured last week to implement the project.

**Future agenda items:**

- Discussion on public relations education on pile burning for the community
- Discussion about Cal Fire Prevention Grants – What committee members are applying and how can we coordinate applications

**7. Adjourned at 10:45**

*Motion by Alison Deak; Seconded by Gary Colliver*